

A
LETTER

T O

Mr. CUMMING.

Concerning the

R E G A R D

Which ought to be had to

Scripture-Consequences.

By JOHN EVANS.



L O N D O N :

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REVEREND SIR,



YOU perceive by the Title the particular Subject of this Address, and at first Sight you will recollect the Occasion of making it to *You*; not only from some private Conversation which has past between us upon the Argument, but also from a Passage relating to it in your late *Advice to Christians to contend for the Faith once delivered to the Saints*.

THIS Passage you have thought fit to put a particular Mark upon in your Title-Page, by singling it out for one of the peculiar *Strictures*, which you prepare the Reader to expect in your Discourse; *That plain Scripture-Consequences are to be regarded as Matters of Revelation*. And indeed, I apprehend it as worthy of a particular Remark

and Consideration as you can do; for I scarce know an Argument, which appears to me of greater Importance in Religion, or that has been less consider'd, than the *Right Stating of that Regard which ought to be paid to the Consequences drawn from the express Declarations of Holy Scripture.*

THIS is indeed an Enquiry of the greatest Concern in it self, at all Times, and to all Persons. If this Regard should be sunk too low, it might reflect on the inexhaustible Fulness of the Scriptures, so justly celebrated and admired by good Men in all Ages; it would greatly abate and straiten the Usefulness of a Gospel-Ministry, and lay a greater Restraint on the Use of Reason in Matters of Religion, than will be allow'd on any Hand. On the other Side Care must be taken, that *such* a Stress be not laid upon Scripture-Consequences, as will reflect upon the Perfection of the Scriptures themselves, or their Plainness and Sufficiency to direct those of the meanest Capacities in Things necessary to Salvation; or that shall countenance the Impositions of fallible Men, and place their Deductions from Scripture upon a Level with the Sacred Oracles themselves; or, which would destroy or render useless that Right of private Judgment, that belongs to every Man, to every Christian, and every Minister; or, that would unnecessarily divide the Disciples of Christ in Affection or Communion.

It must therefore be highly worth the while for any, especially for Ministers of the Gospel, to endeavour to find out the proper Medium in this Case. And if they should happen to fall into different Sentiments in this as well as other Matters, yet the Pursuit of so noble a Design will recommend the Enquiry to every serious Mind. And as long as they endeavour one another's Conviction with the Temper becoming a liberal Education, and the Character of Christian Divines, it must be a very useful Imployment of Time and Thought.

A Disquisition of this Nature seems more especially Seasonable at this Time, upon the late unhappy Difference among the Dissenting Ministers; which, as far as I can apprehend, mainly centres in this single Point. The *plain and express Declarations of Scripture* concerning the Doctrine of the *Blessed Trinity*, and *the Deity of our Saviour*, are, as you know, fully agreed to on both Sides. Nor have I heard any of our Brethren deny the *Truth* of those Deductions and Consequences from Scripture, which are express'd in the *first Article* of the Church of *England*, or the *two Answers* of the *Assembly's Catechism*; tho' for other Reasons, which we have publish'd to the World, many of us declined subscribing them, when you and some others of our Brethren lately saw fit to do it. I am sure for my self, I have no Difference with you about the Truth of those Propositions, which appear to me, as well as to you, to have a good Foundation in Scripture:
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And therefore you would not have received the least Trouble from me, but rather Thanks, for what you have said or may farther say in Commendation or Defence of them. And if there be any unkind Insinuations in your Sermon, intended against those of your Fathers and Brethren, who could not see Reason to join in your Subscription; I should have patiently taken my share in them without any return, leaving you to your own calm Thoughts of the Matter, and concluding that undeserved Reflections will give no Man so much Uneasiness in the End as the Man that makes them.

BUT I gladly take occasion from what you have suggested about *Scripture-consequences*, to offer you my Thoughts upon that Head with the most friendly Mind. I am not sure we shall differ in our Sentiments, when we understand one another. If we differ at all, as far as I can foresee, it is like to be only about the *Stress* which ought to be laid upon Consequences that you and I apprehend to be fairly drawn from Scripture-declarations, as to the regulating of our Brotherly Love and Communion with those who profess not to see those Consequences, while they own what the Scripture expressly declares of the Matter.

THE Assertion you lay down is this, *Advice, &c.* p. 28. That *the manifest and necessary Consequences of plain scriptural Propositions, are as much a divine Revelation, and so to be regarded, as the Principles from which they naturally and necessarily flow.* And your marginal Note in p. 29. is taken up in answering

Answering an Objection, *That Scripture-consequences, how natural und necessary soever they are supposed to be, are Matters of Revelation only to those who see them; but that others, who see them not, are under no Obligation as to these Consequences.*

I shall propose my Apprehensions of this Matter under two Heads.

First, I would shew what Regard appears to me unquestionably due to Scripture-consequences, and which seems to me every Way sufficient to secure their proper Use and Honour.

Secondly, THE Difference and Distinction which I conceive ought to be made between them and the plain and exprefs Declarations of Scripture.

IF in either Part you judge me mistaken, I shall take it for a particular Act of Friendship, if you will take the Pains to set me right; for I hope I can say, I would ever be open to Conviction from the worst Enemy, and much more from a Friend.

I grant then,

I. THAT Consequences, which justly follow from Scripture-Principles, are certainly true in themselves, as the Principles from whence they flow; for a Falsehood can never justly be deduced from Truth. This they are, independent of any Man's collecting them. And in a Sense they may be called a Part of Revelation, as the great Author of That knew that they might, and designed that they should be collected by reasonable Creatures, from those exprefs Declara-
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tions made in Scripture. Thus it was a certain Truth, and a part of the Divine Revelation made in the Books of *Moses*, that there was a future State of Happiness for good Men, because God therein declar'd himself the God of *Abraham*, of *Isaac*, and of *Jacob*, after their several Deaths. This was a just and certain Consequence, whether any actually saw it or no.

2. IT is the Duty of all, who are made Partakers of the great Advantage of Scripture-Revelation, not only to attend carefully to the plain and express Declarations of it ; but diligently to study and consider their Bibles, that they may discover the true Sense and Meaning of the Declarations there made, which *Sense* in it self is undoubtedly but *one* ; and that they may learn from thence any Inferences of Truth or Duty, which may justly be drawn either from particular Texts, or from several laid together ; and that thus they may receive the full practical Influence of Scripture-Truths. Every Christian ought to endeavour in this Manner to * *grow in Grace and in the Knowledge of Jesus Christ* ; to be † *nourish'd up in the Words of Faith and of good Doctrine* ; to || *abound in Knowledge, and in all Judgment, and to approve things which are excellent*, or as I think it should rather be rendred, to *discern or distinguish the Things that differ* ; and to have ** *their Senses exercised to discern both good*

* 1 Pet. iii. 18. † 1 Tim. iv 6. || Phil i. 9, 10.
 ** Heb. v. 14.

and Evil. In order to this, they should make use of the best Helps in their Power, by serious Reading, comparing Spiritual Things with Spiritual, receiving all the Light and Assistance they can from others ; and join earnest Prayer to God for his Holy Spirit, to succeed and guide their Enquiries to the most distinct and comprehensive Knowledge of the Mind of God that they can obtain ; as believing that no Divine Truth either directly contained in Scripture, or deducible from it is useless and insignificant.

3. IT is the direct Office and particular Business of the Ministers of the Gospel, to give their best Assistance to others herein. Not only by laying together the express Declarations of Scripture upon the several Heads of Religion, and pointing out these as there is Occasion to the People ; but by explaining them or *giving the Sense* as clearly and distinctly as they can, and drawing from them such farther Discoveries of Truth and Duty from time to time, as they judge to be any Part of the Counsel of God. And they should endeavour to convince People by the best Arguments they can use, that such Consequences as appear just to themselves really flow from Scripture, tho' they may not be expressed there in so many Words. This way they are to bring out of their Treasures Things new and old.

4. EVERY one, who discerns the Evidence of any Consequences of Truth or Duty from Scripture, is obliged to believe and receive them, as well as the express Declarations of it : He ought

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to govern himself by his Belief of such Consequences, whether they relate to greater or less Matters; and never allow himself to deny the least Truth, or to act contrary to it upon any Temporal Motives, unless he comes to be convinced that he was mistaken. And even such Deductions from Scripture, as only carry probable Evidence to him, yet claim a proportionable Regard. This is a necessary Consequence of Sincerity.

5. I WOULD farther add for the Caution of all, That those, who have sufficient Opportunities and Means to attain the Knowledge of Consequential Truths, cannot be excused *before God* for continuing ignorant of them, if *he* knows that this is owing to their own wicked Neglect, or obstinate Rejection of the Light. So that you may plainly see, I should never state the Objection to your Assertion as you do, that *others who see not Scripture-Consequences, are under no Obligation from them*. I never met with any who so stated it; but either they expressly allowed this Addition, or laid down in the Connection of their Discourse what imply'd it.

I NOW go on with the same Plainness to propose the Difference and Distinction, which I conceive ought to be made between the express Declarations of Scripture, and the Consequences deduced from them.

I. I CANNOT think, that Consequences from Scripture are in the same strict Sense a Part of Revelation, or as you express yourself *as much a Divine Revelation, and so to be regarded, as the Principles*

ciples from which they flow. Because there is a Mixture of the Reasoning of fallible Men in the Collection of them, along with the infallible Declarations of the Word of God : Which must in some Measure weaken the Force of them, in comparison of the Primary Truths from which they are derived. I take this Case to resemble that of Assurance about our own Interest in the Blessings of the Covenant. You know several worthy Divines formerly went so far, as to make this to be the Essence of saving Faith : But it was very justly argued against them, that Faith is an Assent to some Scripture-Proposition ; but there is no such Scripture-Proposition as this, that *my* Sins are pardoned, or the like : This is only a Judgment I form concerning my own Case by Consequence : Where the Foundation of all indeed is a Scripture-Proposition, *He that believeth shall be saved*, or that Remission of Sins is connected with Repentance. But I cannot conclude that *my* Sins are pardoned, without knowing both what that Faith and Repentance are to which Forgiveness is promised, and without Satisfaction from the Testimony of my own Conscience that I do believe and repent : If I have that, I may justly infer the other also. But this can at most be called but more remotely an Act of Faith, and cannot ordinarily be pronounced with the same Certainty as the other.

THE same I apprehend to hold true of Consequences from Scripture in general. Our Reasonings from it are seldom of the Nature of Mathematical Deductions. Or if they were, the

very Abstruseness of that Way of Reasoning to ordinary People would shew, that Consequences which must be so deduced could hardly be designed by God to be of equal Necessity to all, with those Truths which may be easily come at by the meanest Men, as I shall have Occasion to shew more fully presently.

YOUR Addition of *manifest and necessary* Consequences, and that they *naturally and necessarily* flow from Scripture-Principles, whatever Strength it seems to give to your Assertion at first Sight, I doubt upon farther Consideration will be found of little Service to support it. For the Sense of these Expressions, when apply'd to any *particular* Consequence, must come to this at last, that such a Consequence is *manifest to you or me*, that it is *necessary in our Judgment*. And when we consider, that the same Consequence has not appeared natural or necessary to others, who were as wise and good as we can pretend to be; all that can follow is, that such Consequences that carry so great Evidence *to us*, must be as firmly believed by *us* as the Principles they are derived from: Not that they are to be esteemed as strictly a Part of Revelation to Christians in general, as the Words of Scripture.

2. I APPREHEND, that the *Importance* of Scripture-Consequences must chiefly be measured by the Plainness and Easiness of their Deduction from it. My Reason is, the Perfection of Revelation, and the designed Use of it for the Benefit of *all* Mankind. Would it not impeach the Perfection of Scripture,

Scripture, if any Thing of great Importance to Salvation, and our Acceptance with God should not either be most express in it, or so clearly deducible from it, as to be obvious to every honest Mind? Especially when we consider, that the Scripture was intended to make the most Illiterate, as well as the most Learned, *wise unto Salvation*; and often intimates, that the plainnest People were more likely to receive it, and saving Benefit by it, than the Wise and the Prudent.

IN the *express Declarations* of the Scripture itself, I agree with what you say, *Pag. 13.* that the *Fundamentals* (or the Truths of most essential Importance in Christianity,) *must be gathered*, partly from particular Texts declaring them to be necessary, and from the whole Tenor of Scripture, from the *Explicitness of the Revelation concerning them, from the Nature and Quality of the Doctrines themselves, and that Influence they have upon the Whole of the Christian Life.* But in *Consequences*, how much soever we may apprehend them to illustrate the Scheme of Christianity, I think there is no Measure so proper to judge of their Moment, as this of the Plainness and Easiness of their Deduction from Scripture. For I apprehend it one main End of Revelation, to lay Things necessary to Salvation clearly before Men by an easy Way of Conveyance, supported by the Argument of Divine Authority; that so the plainnest People, who are not used to a Course of regular Reasoning, might yet believe and act as God requireth them in order to eternal Life, upon the Authority of an *It is written.*

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IN Cases therefore, which in their own Nature are peculiarly abstruse and difficult, I cannot help thinking, that it is of far less Consequence to us *there* than in other Cases which are more level to our Capacities, to go one Step beyond Scripture ; because it is a thousand to one but we wade beyond our Depth, and *darken Counsel by Words without Knowledge*. Here, if in any other Case, we should allow for the Infirmities of Human Understanding, and be content with a Person's Profession of what the Scripture expressly declares. If they pretend indeed to give such *Human Explications*, as we apprehend inconsistent with that which is declared expressly in Scripture, and subversive of it ; without doubt we ought, as far as we are called to it, to oppose such Human Explications, and to shew their Inconsistency with the Words of Scripture ; but I cannot think it the most likely Way to make a successful Defence of the Truth, to adopt *other Human Explications* in the Stead of those, so as to make it necessary to defend them, as well as the express Declarations of Scripture.

THE Case is the same as to those Consequences, which lie at a remote Distance from the Scripture-Principles on which they are founded ; the Evidence of which cannot be discerned without a long Train of Reasoning. Tho' these, if justly deduced, are as true as those which stand *immediately* connected with the Scripture-Principles from whence they are derived ; yet I think they must necessarily be allowed to decrease in proportion to their Distance in their Importance to Mankind in general

general ; because the Body of People are not so likely to be convinced of them ; and by the general End of Revelation we may collect, that if God had reckoned them of equal Importance, he would have taken the same Way as he has done for other Things, to give an immediate and express Revelation of them, which would have reached every one.

THIS leads me to consider the Case of the *Sadducees*, who were blamed by our Saviour for not believing the Resurrection, or as you say, p. 29. *Marg.* that *they saw not the Resurrection in the Writings of Moses*, tho' it was not literally contained in the *Pentateuch*. As to this Case, I will freely own, that the Doctrine of the Resurrection of the Body required such a Train of Reasoning to infer it from God's declaring himself the God of *Abraham*, &c. that it must be reckoned among remote Consequences, tho' some State of Happiness in another Life might easily be collected from it. But then we must consider, that as it is a true Consequence ; so our Lord, who blamed them for not observing it, was an infallible Judge of Hearts, he knew what Prejudices might hinder them from discerning it : And we cannot from his Example be justified in laying the same Blame on others for not discerning Consequences equally remote. Besides, they had in many other Passages of the *Old Testament* several more direct Assertions of the Doctrine of the Resurrection ; and tho' Christ argued *ad hominem* to them only from, an obscurer Passage in the Writings of *Moses*, because they received

ceived no other Part of the *Old Testament*, he might for ought I know design herein tacitly to blame them for not receiving the other inspired Writings as well as these; which may appear no improbable Conjecture, if we observe how generally he speaks to them, before he appeals to that Instance out of *Moses*, *Ye err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the Power of God*. But this I am sure I may say, that the Denial of the Doctrine of the Resurrection by any of us, after it is so much more clearly revealed, would be unspeakably more Criminal, than it was then in the *Sadducees*.

3. It appears to me, that Consequences from Scripture are obligatory only upon those, who either actually see the Connection of them with Scripture-Declarations, or have had sufficient Means to discover that Connection, unless they were wickedly Negligent or Obstinate: And that of this last God alone is a competent Judge, and not one Man concerning another.

You see here, that I freely allow with you, *p. 30. Marg.* That the Question is not, what a Man sees, or does not see; but what he ought to see, what he might see, if his Mind were not inlaid with Prejudice or Passion, and he humbly resigned his Understanding to God. Voluntary Ignorance I readily grant will be no Excuse. And every Man ought very seriously to lay this to Heart; and therefore to make very careful Enquiries, especially in Matters of great Importance in Christianity; to divest himself all he can of Pride, and of every Prepossession; to come to the Holy Scriptures with the
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Temper of a Learner, what God would have him to believe and do; and earnestly to pray to God to search and try him, and to help him to discern his Prejudices or Mistakes, if he is under the Power of any. I will not say, that where Men take not these Steps which Sincerity dictates, Ignorance even of some consequential Truths may not be ruinous to them.

Nor will I say, that there are no Cases, wherein one Man may judge of another, without Presumption, that he has been *very criminal* in his Conduct about these Matters. For instance, when a Person who is well known to have us'd but little Examination, refuses upon the most friendly Advice to hear or read any thing offer'd against a Sentiment which he has hastily embrac'd; if he treats kind and christian Endeavours to convince him with Scorn and Contempt, I think it will not be an entring upon the peculiar Province of God to conclude, that he acts therein neither worthy of a Man, nor a Christian.

But when Men profess to have made long and careful Enquiries, when they still appear willing to receive any further Light offer'd them in a Christian way, when in the rest of their Behaviour they appear strictly religious and conscientious, I think God has absolutely debarr'd us from censuring them for not acknowledging those Scripture-Consequences, which appear ever so clear to us; tho' we cannot help concluding them mistaken, as long as we are assur'd that we are in the right ourselves. How manifest soever the Connexion of such Consequences with the Words of Scripture is to us, that conveys no Light at all to them; and it is certain

they must govern themselves by their own, and will be judg'd by that Measure, and not by ours, in the Great Day. If they *could* not see the same Conclusion from Scripture as we do, how could that be binding to them?

I foresee it may be ask'd hereupon, Will not this hold equally true as to those who see not the Evidence for the Scriptures themselves? You yourself argue thus, *p. 29. marg.* ' If our not seeing the plain
' and necessary Consequences of scriptural Proposi-
' tions discharges us from any Obligation to believe
' them, it will follow, that our not seeing the Evi-
' dence of a divine Revelation discharges us from
' any Obligation to believe the Scriptures them-
' selves to be the Word of God. The *Jews* (you
' add) saw not that Jesus was the Messiah, tho'
' they imagined themselves clear-sighted, and took
' it very ill, when it was insinuated they were blind.
You will remember, Sir, that I put not the Matter upon Mens seeing or not seeing only; and that if I must suppose you to urge this Argument against my State of the Case, it must stand thus: — ' If I am
' not obliged to receive those Consequences from
' Scripture, which, tho' they appear plain and
' necessary to another, yet appear not so to me,
' tho' God knows, that I conscientiously enquire
' into the Matter, and endeavour to discover the
' Truth; then it will follow by Parity of Reason,
' that a Man would not be obliged to receive the
' Scriptures themselves, if God knows, that upon
' a conscientious Enquiry after Truth, he cannot
' discover the Evidence of them.' For my part, I shall not attempt to deny the Consequence thus stated,

ted, nor reckon it any Absurdity at all. But then I must add, that there is a great deal of Reason to question, whether this is ever a Case in Fact. The Evidence for Christianity and the Scriptures themselves appears to me so full, so various, so accommodate to all Capacities, that I question, whether upon a fair Proposal of it, it be possible for a conscientious Enquirer to reject it; especially now, since Christ's Resurrection and Ascension into Heaven, and the Descent of the Spirit, and the other finishing Attestations given to the Gospel. This I say in the Theory; and I apprehend it very proper to be suggested for a Caution to all, how they venture to reject the Gospel. But I think even now, where there are not the evident Marks of a wicked Life accompanying it, we ought to leave such to the Judgment of Christ. And tho' he was undoubtedly able with Certainty to pronounce of some of the *Jews* in his time, that they rejected him out of Insincerity, this would not have justified an ordinary Person in those Days for laying the same Charge against any.

4. I doubt whether I should have a sufficient Warrant for denying Brotherly Love, or Christian Communion to any, *barely* for a difference about Scripture Consequences, as long as they own the express Declarations of Scripture, give credible Proofs that they have taken pains to understand the Mind of God in them, and in other respects appear truly conscientious.

For if I should deny Christian Communion to such, it must either be, because I cannot esteem them credible Professors of Christianity, or because I judge something more than a credible Profession of Chris-

tianity, necessary to give Right to Christian Communion. I apprehend that you and I shall perfectly agree in denying the last. If then we should differ on this Head, it must be on the other Branch; and it must be asserted, that there may be reason not to esteem a Man a Credible Professor of Christianity, tho' he owns the express Declarations of Scripture, and gives credible Proof that he has taken Pains to understand the Mind of God in his Word, and in other respects appears truly conscientious, merely upon Account of his differing from me in some Consequences which appear plain to me from Scripture. Now I cannot see how I could refuse to own such a Man for a visible Christian, without one of these three things, either taking upon me to judge of his Insincerity which I dare say you will disclaim; or, supposing that the Scripture makes more necessary to a Man's being a Christian, than it does itself declare, which is to me absurd; or else disowning the Perfection of the Christian Rule.

If any should say, that the Reason why they cannot have Christian Communion with such a Man, is, because his wrong Apprehension of the Sense of Scripture, or of a Consequence deduc'd from it, is a Proof, that he has not taken due Pains to understand the Mind of God: I should fear, were I to say so, lest it would be assuming a Right to judge another's Servant, and setting up for a Lord in Christ's House, and not a Minister acting by the stated Rules he has left me.

I shall therefore freely tell you, how I should think myself oblig'd to act in such a Case. If a Man of such a Character, as has been describ'd, should

should apply to me for Christian Communion, and either by good Information from others or by his own voluntary Declaration I should understand, that he differ'd from me in the Sense of some Scriptures, or some Consequences from thence, which appear to me clear and of considerable importance ; after I had used my best endeavours to convince him of what I apprehend the Truth, if I should not be so happy as by the Blessing of God to succeed, I should yet freely declare, that I own'd him as a Fellow-Christian, notwithstanding what I take for his mistake : And I should proceed either to admit him to Communion or not, as I thought upon the whole it would be like to do more hurt or good in the Christian Society where I minister. If I found him dispos'd peaceably and quietly to enjoy his own Opinion without disturbing the Peace of the Congregation, I know not how I durst refuse to admit one whom I believe in my Conscience that Christ receives. But if either his Imprudence or his warm Zeal for his peculiar Sentiment should give reason to apprehend that he would raise a Flame ; or if the general Sense of the Society seem'd to lay a greater Stress than I did upon such a Consequence, I should desire him to forbear, not for the Sake of his Notion, but for the Peace of the Society.

And now, Sir, if what I have offer'd about Scripture-Consequences in general prove true, (as at present it appears to me, tho' I shall be ready to acknowledge any mistake upon Conviction ;) I think there is no Case wherein it can be more fitly applicable than in reference to so sublime a Point

as the Doctrine of the Trinity. It seems agreed among us all, that this Doctrine is a Mystery above our Comprehension, and attended with many Difficulties which none of us will pretend to explain: That the Discovery of *Father, Son and Spirit*, is entirely owing to Scripture-Revelation: That now this Discovery is made, we know not precisely what these Terms mean; we have no clear and distinct Notions, either wherein the distinction between Father, Son and Spirit lies, or how such distinct Attributions as are made to each are to be reconcil'd with the Unity of God. I cannot therefore but say with Mr. Robinson * that *I am not fond of saying less or more about this Matter than what is written there*, i. e. in Scripture. And I take this Occasion to declare my hearty Concurrence with him in the Scriptural Account he has given of this sacred Doctrine in *his Part* of the late Performance, and return him my publick Thanks for it: And as many of my non-subscribing Brethren as I have consulted, declare themselves of the same Sentiment. I agree with him in the Evidences he has produc'd out of Scripture for the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Spirit; and apprehend that he has given the Genuine Sense of most of the Texts he has produc'd. What he has produced upon all the Articles, is the Matter of my Faith. What he has added in the end, p. 39. *That these three are the one God, the same in Substance or Essence, equal in Power and Glory*; (meaning I suppose of the same numerical Essence;) appears indeed to me a just Consequence from Scripture, as far as I allow

* *Doctr. of the Trinity stated and defended by some Lond. Ministers*, p. 18.

allow myself to enter into the *Modus* of this Mystery. But here I dare not be so positive, because I find not the Scripture so exprefs, as in the Ascription of the Characters of Godhead to Father, Son and Spirit. If any now, with the great Mr. *Howe* and some other very Learned and Pious Men, should apprehend the Mystery to lie rather in the *Unity* than in the *Trinity*, tho' that Hypothesis appears to me liable to greater Objections than the other; yet I should not take this to be a difference in the Scripture-Doctrine itself, but in the Manner of accounting for it. And if any, in this Subject of pure Revelation, shall chuse not to go one step beyond Scripture, or shall decline to use any particular Word about it, which is not found in Scripture, as *Person*, or *Essence*, or *Substance*; this shall not make the least Abatement of my Brotherly Love to him.

You seem yourself inclin'd to a Notion out of the common Way of the Orthodox about the *Generation of Christ*, and the Sense wherein he is called in Scripture *the Son of God*, that these in strictness of Speech are not to be understood of his divine præexistent Nature, but of him as God-man, invested with the Office of Mediator. I say not that you affirm this; but whoever reads your marginal Note, p. 16, 17, 18. will find that you speak favourably of it, that you reckon it would be a great advantage in the Argument against the *Arians*, and you seem to promise us hereafter some of your farther Thoughts upon that Head. I mention not this to represent you as unsound and heretical upon account of such a Speculation;

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lation; you are not by me esteem'd one jot the less Orthodox in the main of the Doctrine. But I only take notice of this, in order to add this Observation upon it, that whoever enter into this Notion of the Generation of Christ, (as, if I am not misinform'd, some others of our subscribing Brethren have done,) they will recede from the Doctrine establish'd in the ancient Creeds, and in the several Confessions of the Reform'd Churches, full as widely, and in a Matter wherein those Creeds and Confessions are altogether as positive and particular, as in the absolute individual Unity of the Divine Nature and Essence; *which, you say p. 18. marg. whoever derogates from, may be justly charg'd with denying the Faith once deliver'd to the Saints.* Now tho' I allow with you, *p. 17. that this would be a poor Way of Reasoning to build upon against the Truth of an Explication;* yet I think it is a just Consideration, to dispose those to Moderation and Charity, who are of this Sentiment; and should dispose all to lay no great Stress in these Matters upon *Human Authorities and Interpretations,* I will add, or *Harmonies of Confessions;* but with the noble Bereans, to *search the Scriptures diligently, whether these Things are so or no,* and freely and without Censure to allow others the same Liberty. I am,

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Reverend Sir,

London,
May 8. 1719.

Your affectionate Brother and Servant,

JOHN EVANS.

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